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THE RATIO OF PHYSICIANS TO THE POPULATION.

The following article appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, January 10, 1901:—

Recent publications present an opportunity to learn the relative number of physicians to the population in the United States and in Germany, with a fair degree of accuracy, and to compare these numbers in the different States with each other.

Dr. Abbott's recent monograph, which was prepared for the Paris Exposition,¹ contains a table, the basis of which is "Polk's Register of Physicians in the United States." The relative figures were determined by comparing these figures with the population of each State as estimated for 1898, and may be considered as fairly correct, with the exception of Oklahoma and one or more new States in which the rate of increase was out of all proportion to that of former years.

The publication of a later edition of the *Register* in 1900 makes it possible to present a more accurate table, based upon the recent census of 1900. From the following table it would appear that either the old aphorism that 1000 inhabitants are required for the support of the average physician must be considered as out of date, or a large proportion of the profession are not earning a living, since the average for the United States at large, as shown in the following table, is 1 physician to each 655 inhabitants. Moreover, the large annual product of the medical colleges is constantly tending to diminish this number of inhabitants to each physician.

An examination of the following table shows that California is the State which is most liberally supplied with medical men, the proportion there being 1 physician to 416 inhabitants, and the ratio in Colorado and Vermont is about the same, while the States which are the most sparsely supplied are South Carolina, North Dakota, North Carolina, New Mexico, and Alaska, with, respectively, 1 to 1123, 1132, 1189, 1395, and 2349 inhabitants.

These conditions are clearly illustrated for the year 1898 by means of a chart in the pamphlet referred to. The two tables for 1898 and 1900 do not present very striking differences except in the States of Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska, the reasons for the difference being

¹ The Past and Present Condition of Public Hygiene and State Medicine in the United States; being No. 19 of the Monographs on American Social Economics, prepared for the Paris Exposition of 1900.

NUMBER OF INHABITANTS TO EACH REGISTERED PHYSICIAN, 1900.

Name of State.	Number of Inhabitants to Each Physician.	Name of State.	Number of Inhabitants to Each Physician.
California.....	416	Delaware.....	694
Colorado.....	452	Nevada.....	706
Vermont.....	469	Oklahoma.....	707
Ohio.....	489	Nebraska.....	725
Indiana.....	494	Idaho.....	749
Missouri.....	507	Florida.....	751
Arkansas.....	546	Arizona.....	754
Kansas.....	555	Washington.....	762
Tennessee.....	556	Georgia.....	767
Maine.....	556	Montana.....	782
Massachusetts.....	561	Virginia.....	842
Illinois.....	562	New Jersey.....	856
New Hampshire.....	564	South Dakota.....	894
Maryland.....	565	Alabama.....	930
Michigan.....	570	Wisconsin.....	936
Indian Territory.....	597	Utah.....	944
New York.....	603	Wyoming.....	964
Iowa.....	609	Louisiana.....	985
Texas.....	612	Minnesota.....	1,004
Kentucky.....	625	Mississippi.....	1,027
Oregon.....	638	South Carolina.....	1,123
United States.....	655	North Dakota.....	1,132
Pennsylvania.....	662	North Carolina.....	1,189
West Virginia.....	667	New Mexico.....	1,395
Connecticut.....	687	Alaska.....	2,349
Rhode Island.....	692		

apparently due in the two former States to an unusual increase in the population, and in the latter to an unusual increase in the number of physicians.

Turning now to Germany, an entirely different condition is evident, as shown by the recent publication of the Imperial Board of Health of the German Empire.² In that country, three enumerations of the physicians have been made at intervals of eleven years; one in 1876, one in 1887, and the last in April, 1898. The last enumeration was very comprehensive, and included all persons employed in connection with the care and treatment of the sick, either in private practice or in hospitals or other institutions. The circular calling for information was issued by the Imperial Board of Health of Germany, and included the enumeration of the following persons:—

² *Medizinal-statistische Mittheilungen aus dem kaiserlichen Gesundheitsamte*, Bd. vi, H. 1, Berlin, 1899.

Regular practicing physicians: (a) Physicians in private practice; (b) physicians in institutions; homeopathic physicians; military and naval surgeons; other "approved" practitioners, including surgeons and country doctors; dentists; dentists' assistants; nurses, masseurs, etc.; veterinary surgeons, civil and military; midwives.

The foregoing are still further classified quite minutely.

Two excellent maps are also presented, showing the distribution of physicians in the German Empire.

In the empire at large the number of physicians had increased from 15,284 in 1887 to 24,725 in 1898, or more than 56 per cent, while the population had increased only 14 per cent. This last enumeration shows that the ratio of the number of physicians to the population in Germany is very much less than that which prevails in the United States, since in the German Empire there was in 1898 only 1 physician to each 2114 inhabitants, while in the United States at the same time there was 1 for every 647 inhabitants.

The German documents also give a further classification in detail according to the density of the population of 1005 districts.

In districts having more than 20,000 (cities), the number of the physicians had increased from 6648 in 1887 to 12,651 in 1898, or 90 per cent, the population increasing meanwhile only 48 per cent.

In districts having from 5000 to 20,000 inhabitants, the number of physicians had increased from 3295 to 4256, or 29 per cent, the population increasing only 19 per cent.

In the smaller districts having less than 5000 in each, the physicians increased in the eleven years from 5881 to 7818, or 33 per cent, while the population remained nearly stationary.

The number of homeopathic physicians in the German Empire is stated as 240, or less than 1 per cent of the whole number of practitioners.

The veterinary surgeons were 3813 in number, and are compared with the class of patients whose ills they are called upon to treat, there being in the German Empire 1 veterinary surgeon to every 1240 horses, and 5677 head of cattle.

An examination of the maps and accompanying tables shows that both physicians and midwives are distributed most liberally in Bavaria and the districts along the Rhine, while the districts which are most sparsely supplied are those of Northeastern Prussia and the Russian border.